

Special Court for Sierra Leone
Press and Public Affairs Office

PRESS RELEASE

Freetown, Sierra Leone, 3 December 2002

Judges Elect Geoffrey Robertson QC as President

The newly sworn in judges of the Special Court for Sierra Leone on Monday elected British QC Geoffrey Robertson as president of the Appeals Chambers which makes him president of the Court. Judge Rosolu John Bankole Thompson, a Sierra Leonean, was elected presiding judge of the Court's Trial Chambers.

The panel of eight distinguished local and international judges that Robertson now leads is to try the political and military leaders responsible for atrocities committed during the country's armed conflict.

"History has shown that there can be no lasting peace without a measure of justice" Robertson said, at a press conference in Freetown following his election. He will preside over a Court created by the United Nations in agreement with the local government. Its budget of \$60m has been provided primarily by the United States, Britain and the Netherlands.

Robertson said, "The Court has the power to punish the authors of the barbarities committed here no matter where they are or what position they may currently occupy". He recalled that Freetown is where the British navy first liberated African slave two centuries ago, and said that it is now a fitting place for a base to fight impunity in Africa.

Robertson is one of Britain's best known human rights lawyers. He has appeared in many well known trials. He recently defended the London Times in the libel action brought by Lord Ashcroft and Guardian journalist Andrew Muldrum who was prosecuted earlier this year in Zimbabwe. He is married to the novelist Kathy Lette.

#END

INFORMATION FOR MEDIA - NOT FOR ADVERTISING

Produced by the
Press and Public Affairs Office
Special Court for Sierra Leone
Mobile: 232 76 655 237 Email: SCSL-pressoffice@un.org
Visit our website at www.sc-sl.org